



Maryland Cattlemen's Association, Inc.

"The Voice of the Maryland Cattle Industry"

January 22, 2020

TO: The Honorable Jason Gallion, co-sponsors, and members-Senate Finance Committee

RE: **Senate Bill 0188**; Public Health - Misbranded Food - Meat Products

Position: Support

"Providing that a food is misbranded if it is offered for sale in the State with a label that identifies the product as a meat or a meat product and the product contains animal tissue cultured from animal cells outside the animal from which the tissue is derived or is made from plants or insects."

Comments Regarding labeling, branding, and marketing of meat alternatives:

Today there are more protein choices for consumers than ever before. In addition to the popular animal proteins beef, chicken, and pork, newer forms of alternative proteins made from plants, such as soy and peas, (along with the future potential for lab-created protein products) are making their way into the marketplace. While alternative proteins and veggie burgers have existed for decades, some of these newer products have significant financial backing resulting in aggressive marketing and great media fanfare with little consumer attention paid to the specific ingredients, nutrient profiles, or other label information.

It is the firm position of the Maryland Cattlemen's Association, representing cattle producers and farm families from across every county in Maryland, that we **must have a level playing field when it comes to the rules of food marketing, branding, labeling, and production** such that meat alternatives – both current plant-based products and potential future lab-produced products – are properly labeled, branded, marketed, and regulated.

At present, some plant-based and cell-cultured meat advocates, along with certain members of the Maryland General Assembly, have been using false claims specifically about beef, particularly when it comes to the impact of beef production on claims of "climate change", while also grossly misrepresenting beef's important role in the human diet. And, much of what is being put forward as "fact" in relation to "climate change" in the U.S. and Maryland has been discredited by leading scientists both at home and around the world.

Currently, no framework exists for regulating lab-grown products, so we are pushing hard to ensure that the USDA leads the regulatory oversight for labeling and inspection, just like for animal protein products. As government agencies develop this new regulatory structure, our mission is to seek fairness, truth, and transparency for both producers and consumers.

We continue to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to work together to enforce existing labeling laws for plant-based protein products so that beef's and meat's nomenclature is protected. The FDA has the power to act against companies that use misleading labels to confuse consumers about the true nature of their product. In addition, more than 25 states across the U.S. have introduced various bills (eight have passed) and several states have passed resolutions designed to protect beef's (and meat and milk's) nomenclature.

Therefore, it is the standing policy of the Maryland Cattlemen's Association to support legislation, both in our state and nationally, that will help ensure a level playing field when it comes to the rules of food marketing, branding, labeling, and production, today and in the future. Hence, we voice our support for SB 0188.

Thank You,

Scott M. Barao

Dr. Scott M. Barao
Executive Vice President